

Critical Mass 2011: Online Entry Submissions

Registration for Critical Mass 2011 will be open from June 1 through July 15. You can log in at any time. During that time, please complete the following 4 steps.

Step 1: Enter your personal and billing information through our secure registration pages (click on the 'register' button). If you are paying by check, please send early so it has plenty of time to clear by the deadline. **Checks must be received by July 8** for submissions to be counted.

You have until July 15nd to complete your submission.

Please enter only **one** body of work. Participants are asked to submit work not previously submitted to Critical Mass, but up to *two* previously submitted images are acceptable.

Step 2: Enter the following artist & image information:

Personal information

This is your contact info as you want it to appear in Critical Mass documents and can be different from your billing information. Your last name and email address is required.

Artist statement* (2,000 characters max, including spaces – keep track in the character countdown box on the left)

This should address the specific body of work under consideration, not your general philosophy of art making.

Print and pricing information* (500 characters max, including spaces – keep track in the character countdown box on the left)

This information should include:

Title
Date
Dimensions
Media
Edition information (if available)
Price

Can be conveyed as a list of each image (when the information is different for each print) OR an overall statement for all of the works (when all of the information is the same for all prints).

The information you enter at this step will be on the materials distributed to jurors and fellow participants.

*** See the end of this document for suggestions on writing your artist statement and pricing/editioning your work.**

Step 3: Upload your images, and enter optional title info for each image.

Images must be in jpeg format, only. Each image must be less than 2MB in size, and must not exceed pixel dimensions of 1000 pixels wide or 750 pixels high. Color space is sRGB.

Note: If your image falls within these guidelines, it will not be altered for the online jurying portion of Critical Mass 2011. However, we will need to compress your images for the CD version of CM11 that will be distributed to all participants. We will do our best to ensure that your images are kept at the highest possible level of quality.

Note: The first image you upload will be used as your thumbnail image on info to jurors. Pick an image that is strong and best represents your body of work.

Text entered in the title box will appear along with the image on the site/CD exactly as you have entered it.

You do not have to upload all of your images at once. You can come back to this page and review/change your text information, change your images, or finish uploading images if you didn't upload all ten images the first time around.

Click on "Upload images" and be patient while your images upload! Good things take time.

If any of your images are the incorrect file type or size, the image field will remain blank. Check to make sure your image is the correct file type and meets the guidelines.

Step 4: Check your thumbnail images. Once your images have uploaded, you can click on the thumbnails for full-size previews. Verify that everything is as you want it – *what you see is what everyone (jurors) gets*. You can change images or text information up until the last day of registration, but please, **do not wait until the last minute to enter everything!** Change your work as much as you like, but all changes must be made by **11:59 pm Pacific time on July 15th**. Make sure you've got the right image, with the right title, in the right place.

Notes from a Juror on the Artist Statement –

One of the biggest problems I have seen consistently during the reviews that I have participated in over the last ten years is that many photographers do not know how to talk or write cogently about their work. (The other is the lack of a clear vision or, as I like to say, “pretty pictures with no punch.” More on that another time.)

While I believe strongly that the work must speak for itself, and that no amount of verbal deconstruction will make up for a poorly-conceived or executed idea, a good artist’s statement is essential if the photographer has any desire for recognition or progress, as well as to gain as much as possible from the review process. I have found over the years that the photographers who can speak or write clearly about their work also produce the most affecting and powerful images.

One could argue that there is an inherent paradox in asking photographers to speak or write about their work; presumably if they could do it in words they would be writers, not visual artists. However, just as the best works of fiction or non-fiction engage the reader on a number of different levels, so do the best works of art and photography. To read something really clear about the artist’s vision and process enhances the viewer’s experience of the work and, in the review setting—where often a photographer is presenting the germ of an idea as opposed to a fully-realized project—can make the difference between the reviewer not having a clue what the artist is up to and therefore giving a less favorable comment, and being able to provide constructive feedback. This is why I always read the artist statement.

The essential qualities of a good artist’s statement are clarity, brevity, humility, and a keen awareness of the work that has come before you and inspired you. But first you have to have some idea of why you want to make the work and what you want to express with it—in other words, a concept, even a simple one.

Here’s a great example. I had the opportunity to hear Julia Blackmon describe how she came to make the kinds of photographs she does. She said that she had studied photography in college, and had been a stay-at-home Mom for several years. She wanted some artwork for her house, and she thought she could create something herself that would please her as much as anything she could afford to buy. She admired the work of the seventeenth-century Dutch masters, and she was at home, so her children were her natural subjects.

We are all familiar with the results, which are a fresh, contemporary and very original take on a familiar subject. The images speak to a sense of history, and are ironic and funny without being self-conscious or pretentious. Indeed, they have become almost as iconic as their inspirations. And her statement was short and direct, amplifying the vision behind the work while allowing it to speak for itself—which is, in the end, the whole point.

Joanna Hurley has had a thirty-year-plus career in book publishing working as an editor, publicist, agent, packager and publisher for dozens of photography books, as well as on books on many other subjects for companies large and small. She is a founder of Radius Books, and has been board chair of CENTER since 2005.

Notes from jurors on pricing and editioning –

Some Critical Mass entrants chose to leave their pricing and/or edition information blank. Jurors have noted that not having access to this information has an impact on their voting. As a tool, we offer the comments below as general pointers on how to price or edition your work. Please note these are only general suggestions and do not represent the opinions of all jurors, as their backgrounds vary greatly.

Pricing your work:

While gallerists do not necessarily expect an artist coming to them to know what the price of their prints should be, they should have an idea. Also, artists should be clear about what they want the size of their editions to be and most of all, at what print size they feel their work looks best.

Photographic prints generally cost between \$10 and \$100,000. An artist's basic trajectory is to start print prices lower and have them rise as the demand for the work rises. The price for a given size and type of print should never go down and your print prices are going to be weighed in the context of other artists' prices. That means that you should be finding out what other unrepresented photographers are charging – ask them how they configure things! You can also check prices at non-commercial exhibition venues, such as university galleries. Once you enter into a relationship with a gallery, your print prices will go up because of the value added that the gallery contributes by exhibiting them and working for you to place them in private, and sometimes public, collections.

If you are guessing on a price to place your work at, and it is obviously inaccurate or inflated, jurors will spot and question this. Just because you assign a high price to your work, it does not mean someone will pay it or jurors will think it more worthy content-wise. Research before you assign!

Editioning your work:

Should one assign an edition to one's work, or leave it open?

Some photographers (and most gallerists) believe that in today's market it is critical for an artist to make a limited edition of their work, and that all good collectors demand it. This gives the artist the ability to be able to stop selling a particular image, and to move on and let it have a second life on the secondary market. There is no better sales tool than having a sold out print. It makes a collector pay more attention to what is still available, so that it doesn't sell out before they can buy it. In general, an artist should be more concerned about what they are going to do next than what they have done in the past.

Some photographers do not like assigning editions to their work as they feel it gives gallerists too much control. For example: if a collector or museum wants a particular image that has a sold out edition, the artist is no longer able to reprint and sell it to them. They will have to purchase that image from the secondary market and you, the artist, lose out that sale/income.

In the end, you are responsible for deciding how best to price and edition your work. We've heard from some jurors they are more likely to purchase a print if the pricing information is listed (and reasonable). While you should determine your pricing based on an objective analysis of the market and your costs, you're not required to list a figure here if you feel that would be premature. To suggest that potential buyers "inquire for pricing" is acceptable, but know they would prefer to see the price listed and be prepared with an answer if you are asked.